



Home

The Sanctuary
News and Events
Management Plan
Review
Current Weather

Maps
Research
Education
Management
Advisory Council

Whale Watching
Volunteering

Special
Offerings

Special Offerings

[Conference](#) [Debris](#) [Conference](#)
[Proceedings](#) [Photos](#) [Highlights](#)



International Marine Debris Conference On Derelict Fishing Gear and the Ocean Environment

In 1999, the United States Congress, in response to growing concerns over the large amounts of derelict fishing gear washing ashore on remote beaches and coral reefs of the Hawaiian Islands, charged the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary with the organization of an International Marine Debris Conference to focus on derelict fishing gear and the ocean environment. The goal of the conference is to bring together members of the private and public sectors to assess the problem of derelict fishing gear and recommend solutions.

debris on beach

Derelict fishing gear, marine debris, made up mostly of natural fiber and synthetic lines washed up on a single beach in Kahuku on O`ahu's north shore.

This conference represents the continuation of the efforts of numerous organizations and agencies that have been addressing this issue. In 1987, the North Pacific Rim Fishermen's Conference on Marine Debris brought together fishing industry representatives from throughout the Pacific region to discuss the problem of derelict fishing gear and identify ways to address this problem.

In 1996, the National Marine Fisheries Service began assessing the magnitude of this problem in the waters surrounding the Northwestern

debris offloading

Offloading part of the derelict fishing gear removed from a 1999 cleanup of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. (Photo: U.S. Coast Guard)

Hawaiian Islands. Since 1998, the NMFS, in cooperation with United States Coast Guard, has led a multi-agency task force investigating the problem. These efforts have provided a wealth of information about the amount, types and impacts of derelict fishing gear. The removal of debris has been a significant component of these efforts. In addition, the use of oceanographic modeling has helped provide a better understanding of the movements of debris and holds

promise as a possible means to help identify and reduce debris sources in the future.

While the magnitude of the this problem is daunting, there is cause for optimism. Since the passage of MARPOL, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from ships at sea adopted by the United Nations, there is some indication that the rate of plastic disposal at sea may indeed have begun to decrease in some areas. While the reported entanglement rates for some species of marine mammals (e.g., Hawaiian monk seal, Antarctic fur seal) have increased, the reported rates have declined for others (e.g., northern fur seal).

While representing only a small percent of the total amount of marine debris in our oceans, derelict fishing gear is of great concern due to its potential impacts on the marine environment. The solution to the problem of derelict fishing gear lies beyond the capabilities or resources of any one nation, agency, organization or sector. It is a complex and difficult challenge that must be faced cooperatively if the goal of maintaining clean and healthy oceans is to be achieved.

divers free seals

Since 1972, divers have found 170 endangered Hawaiian monk seals entangled in nets. Twenty-two were found in 1999 alone. (Photo: Ray Boland)

Toward this goal, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary is proud to welcome you to the International Marine Debris Conference on Derelict Fishing Gear and the Ocean Environment. This conference will address the Pacific-wide nature of derelict fishing gear and its impacts on the marine environment, including protected and endangered species and habitat. The goal of this Conference is to develop specific recommendations and strategies for action.

'A 'ohe hana nui ke alu 'ia

"No task is too great when done together"

Many thanks to all those [sponsoring and contributing to the conference](#).

[\[top\]](#)

Revised by the [HIHWNMS web team](#) on July 11, 2003.

URL:

http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov/special_offerings/sp_off/imdc_background.html.